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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 08SOFIA672, BULGARIA'S NEXT PRIME MINISTER

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08SOFIA672**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">08SOFIA672</a>	<a href="#">2008-10-22 07:18</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Sofia</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.bivol.bg/wlborisov.html>

<http://novinar.bg/?act=galleries&do=detail&rec=1&pic=10469#galblock>

VZCZCXRO1035  
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHSF #0672/01 2960718  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 220718Z OCT 08  
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5469  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SOFIA 000672

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/22/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA'S NEXT PRIME MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The odds-on favorite to become Bulgaria's next Prime Minister is Sofia Mayor Boyko Borissov. A rough hewn and volatile figure with rumored links to organized crime, Borissov exploits the electorate's yearning for a dominant leader to reverse the perceived failures of current PM Stanishev and his gridlocked three-party coalition. Touting his lack of sophistication as a badge of honor, Borissov is the most cunning and charismatic player of the

day. He is explicitly cultivating U.S. and European approval to bolster his legitimacy. Using this to our advantage, we can push him and his GERB party into more responsible positions as next year's elections approach. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Though elections are still as many as nine months out, Sofia Mayor Borissov is the man to beat. A political headliner, he outpaces PM Stanishev by over 30 points, vying with President Parvanov in popularity. Borissov's charisma, prominent (and usually favorable) media treatment, and the discredited state of rival leaders (and their parties) propel his two-year old GERB party. Despite self-styled claims that it is Bulgaria's "new center-right," GERB's appeal flows from Borissov's larger-than-life personality and his populist bent. He attracts disenchanted and alienated voters from both the left and right, as well as huge swaths of the protest vote against the unpopular Socialist-led coalition.

#### Raw Political Force

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13. (C) A canny political operator, Borissov is smart and savvy even if relatively unsophisticated. More comfortable on the Bulgarian than the world stage, he is no novice at playing on larger arenas. He fully understands power -- real and symbolic -- and how to hold and exercise it. Underestimating his political talent or drive is a costly mistake for his rivals and opponents. Called a "raw political force," with emphasis on all three words, he is an instinctual decision maker. As a political operator, he is more tactician and inside player than strategist. At times mercurial, he can be (according to our GERB contacts) "impatient" and "change his mind every day" even when being completely focused on clearly defined goals. Borissov has a tainted past -- personal ties to 1990s mafia leaders -- but denies any involvement in crime. During his Secretary General tenure at the MOI, he personally led raids against drug dealers, but there were no busts of any major OC figures. As elections near, questions about his past are likely to increase, especially from the desperate Socialists who plan to mount a negative campaign to cast the election as a "referendum on Borissov."

#### Springboard Sofia

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14. (C) Borissov touts U.S. and European ties whenever possible, including his support from the center-right Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Hanns Seidel Foundation, the Robert Schumann Foundation, and his personal relationship with Angela Merkel and the European People's Party. In his initial meeting with the Ambassador, he stressed Bulgarians are not used to taking decisions on their own and need Washington and Brussels to "tell the PM what needs to be done." He added that when GERB wins, he plans to have a foreign expert in each ministry to support and monitor its work. A directive not collaborative leader, Borissov would dominate whatever cabinet he chooses.

15. (C) We have consistently urged Borissov to develop teams to elaborate policy on key issues, such as national security, energy security, and rule of law, and to identify and groom candidates for senior and mid-level government positions. We doubt the planning process has gone much further than making lists and some initial contacts, but preliminary soundings hold some promise. Borissov and nominal party head Tsvetan Tsvetanov shared names of potential future ministers in a GERB-led government, including some non-GERB choices; some hold promise. GERB has

already floated the Finance Ministry to World Bank Director Kristalina Georgieva and the MFA to GERB European Parliament Deputy Roumyana Zheleva. Borissov is a master of misdirection and false leads, at times hinting he may not take the Prime

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Minister's position but offer it to someone else. This helps fuel speculation that he has the Presidency in mind, a calculated ploy to boost his image as a national unifier.

Wild Cards: Russia, Ataka  
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¶6. (C) Despite his pro-European talk, insiders believe Borissov is a "wild card" when it comes to Russia. He is close to Lukoil regional head Valentin Zlatev, rumored to support GERB with cash. (Hedging bets, Zlatev is also a big BSP money patron). Borissov keeps a wary eye on electoral dynamics. A GERB survey shows that 64 percent of likely GERB voters and 67 percent of Bulgarians in general favor close ties with Russia. With an alienated, angry electorate, GERB looks to minimize defections to radical fringes, especially Ataka. Based on the survey, Borissov reportedly told his team that he would make pro-Russian statements from "time to time" and stay away from the Russia vs. NATO debate to keep his electorate happy.

¶7. (C) Borissov may be prepared to tack away from center-right positions under certain circumstances. For example, GERB has flirted with Ataka, conducting some joint actions with them and (sometimes) speaking well of their leader Volen Siderov. He assures us he is doing so only to keep up his populist credentials and would never form a coalition with them, in fact, would go into opposition before doing so. But, if GERB faced the prospect of needing a coalition with the BSP or ethnically Turkish MRF, odds are Borissov would manipulate all parties to drive the best bargain.

¶8. (C) The one constant in Borissov is his need for foreign validation. He looks to the U.S. for much of that, showcasing his relations with U.S. politicians and law enforcement officials. The likely victory of his personality-based party in the next general elections illustrates Bulgaria's continued political immaturity, as many still believe in a savior who will quickly resolve problems. Borissov's need for our blessing and oversized ego are powerful tools we can use to steer him toward becoming an effective national leader. Leveraging his pride and need for legitimacy, we can nudge him and his party toward a modern political formation that naturally looks to the U.S. as a genuine partner. But in any case, if Borissov wins, it will be quite a ride.  
McEldowney